

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STAFF NOTE

Review Item:

Report from Kentucky Youth Advocates on the study of alternative education (KYA Report and KDE's response to the report under separate cover)

Applicable Statute or Regulation:

KRS 158:645; KRS 158.6455; 703 KAR 5:050; 703 KAR 5:070; 703 KAR 5:040

History/Background:

Existing Policy. In August 2006, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) entered into a contract with Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA) for the purpose of conducting an in-depth study of alternative education in Kentucky. This initiative was the result of continuing conversations with the Kentucky Board of Education regarding the quality of services provided in alternative education programs. At the October KBE meeting, representatives from Kentucky Youth Advocates will be in attendance to present findings of their review of alternative education programs conducted during the 2006-07 school year. Additionally, KYA will present a set of recommendations for improvement of services to youth receiving their education in these programs.

With the rapid growth of alternative education in recent years, both the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) have recognized the need for oversight to ensure equitable services are provided to the increasing numbers of students served in these programs.

There are two different types of alternative programs involved in the review by Kentucky Youth Advocates. The first type includes A5 programs, which are defined as “district-operated and district-controlled facilities...designed to provide services to at-risk populations with unique needs.”

In addition to A5 programs, Kentucky has A6 programs defined as “district-operated instructional programs in a nondistrict-operated institution or school.” These programs serve youth who are State Agency Children (SAC). These young people are the responsibility of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the Department of Community Based Services (DBCS), and the Department for Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services (DMHMR). These departments operate, fund or contract for services from a variety of programs including residential facilities, group homes and day treatment centers. The education of these youth is the responsibility of local education agencies where they reside.

Since 2005, five separate reports have been presented to the Kentucky Board of Education (KBE) on issues pertaining to alternative education programs. A brief review of these recent presentations to KBE is included below:

December 2005: As a result of concerns about the quality of educational services provided in alternative programs, KBE approved a plan to have the Kentucky Center for School Safety (KCSS) monitor 40 A5 programs (monitoring was conducted from January through May 2006).

February 2006: The Kentucky Educational Collaborative for State Agency Children (KECSAC) presented its annual report to KBE on A6 programs. Information was presented on numbers and types of programs and youth served. Additionally, attention was focused on academic performance of youth in A6 programs.

June 2006: The Kentucky Center for School Safety presented findings of the monitoring process of 40 A5 programs. As a result of concerns revealed from the monitoring, the KBE directs KDE to send correspondence to all superintendents regarding the need to provide quality services in alternative education programs. KBE also approved a plan for KDE to issue a Request for Proposals for an outside agency to conduct a yearlong in-depth study of alternative education programs (A5 and A6) in Kentucky. *Note: In August, the contract was awarded to Kentucky Youth Advocates (KYA).*

December 2006: Representatives from Kentucky Youth Advocates presented information to KBE regarding progress and findings, to date, of the project to study alternative education programs. KYA informed KBE that the study will be completed at the end of the 2006-07 school year, and findings and recommendations for improvement will be provided at the October 2007 meeting of the KBE.

February 2007: Information on academic and non-academic data on A5 and A6 programs was presented to KBE. As a separate item, KECSAC gave its annual report.

October 2007: Kentucky Youth Advocates will present findings of the review of alternative education programs conducted during the 2006-07 school year.

The full report from Kentucky Youth Advocates will be provided under separate cover. KDE's response to the KYA report is also being provided under separate cover.

Policy Issues:

What guidance does the Kentucky Board of Education have for staff on the next steps outlined?

Impact on Getting to Proficiency:

Increasing numbers of Kentucky students are receiving educational services in alternative education programs. As these numbers of students grow, the quality of education services they receive in these programs becomes increasingly important in regard to reaching proficiency. It is imperative that a process be implemented to ensure these students are receiving equitable educational services.

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